

ATI-RTC-CAR Training and Extension

WEAVERS

The official publication of the Agricultural Training Institute - Regional Training Center-Cordillera Administrative Region

Featuring
the Story of
Bacayan's Farm

plus
Salt
&
Pepper
Farm



The *latest*
Trainings, Workshops,
Updates and
much more!

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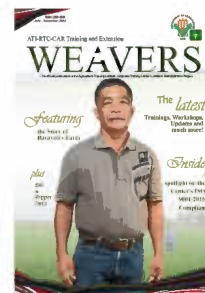
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WEAVERS is the official semestral publication of the Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Training Institute-Regional Training Center-Cordillera Administrative Region (ATI-RTC-CAR).

This publication contains articles on the latest news relating to or about the training activities, technologies, updates, and success stories of the Institute and its clients.

WEAVERS welcomes comments and suggestions from readers.



ON THE COVER

21 - Responding Confidently to Extend to Farmers:

Michael and Angie Lumas-i is the couple behind Bacayan's Farm. At present, the farm is a standard example of family business enterprise where each

has importance role to make their operation a success.

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ATI CORDILLERA RETAINS ITS ISO 9001:2015 COMPLIANT

"No major or minor nonconformities found."



"No major or minor nonconformities found," this is the verdict of TUV-SUD auditor Mr. Xavier Lance Dy after he went through the ATI-RTC-CAR's services and processes on November 28, 2023 for the recertification of its ISO 9001:2015 compliance.

The Center's sections and units, through the process owners, presented evidence and responded to probing questions from the auditor to prove the Center's compliance with its Quality Management System and to the requirements of the

ISO 9001:2015. The ATI-RTC-CAR is one of the five ATI Centers together with the ATI Central Office which were selected as audit sites for the ATI recertification audit.

The scope of the certification audit which the auditor scrutinized were the following: Development and Provision of Training; Knowledge Products and Services; Accreditation of Extension Services Providers; Scholarships; Alliance Building; National Extension System Planning; and Monitoring and Evaluation.

Ms. Athena Baguisi, ATI-CO ISO Team Leader lead the Audit Team. With her is Ms. Carmela Joy Esto, Management and Audit Analyst and Mr. Xavier Lance Dy, TUV-SUD Auditor.

The ISO 9001:2015 is a worldwide standard that sets requirements for a strong Quality Management System that details specific processes, procedures, and activities that ATI must implement, maintain, and improve to satisfactorily deliver its mandated duties, responsibilities, and services to the public.



Group photo. From right to left, seated in front - Ms. Carmela Joy Esto, Mr. Xavier Lance Dy (TUV-SUD Auditor), Mr. Maximino Aromin (Officer-In-Charge), Ms. Athena Baguisi, (ATI-CO ISO Team Leader) together with the ATI-RTC-CAR Staff.



CASSAVA FOCALS SWITCH-ON THE NECPH APP



“This course gave me a lot of learnings. Cassava is something I’m not familiar with, but this training taught me something new about it. The NECPH is a great resource for extension workers, particularly because it has a feature that instantly generates recommendations” acclaimed Ms. Cristy Cadiogan, BSU Instructor and one of the participants of the Training on the Nutrient Expert® for Cassava held at the Dam-mu-han Hall, ATI-RTC-CAR, BSU Compd., La Trinidad, Benguet.

The objective of the training was to let the participants be familiarized with the Nutrient expert, and be able to generate site-specific nutrient management recommendations through the Nutrient Expert® Cassava Philippines (NECPH) for their respective farmer-clienteles.

Ms. Vicky May Guinayen, the ATI-RTC-CAR’s Focal Person on Corn and Cassava and the

Project Officer of the training cited that the Nutrient Expert® for Cassava (Philippines) developed by the Institute of Plant Breeding of UPLB is a decision-support tool designed for desktop computers, tablets, and mobile phones (with some prerequisites) which enables local experts as well as farmers to quickly formulate fertilizer and fertilization recommendations NSIC-registered and some local cassava varieties in the Philippines. Nutrient Expert® for Cassava will help farmers increase both their yield and productivity through cost-efficient fertilizer recommendations accompanied by management strategies in order to attain the yield goal based on the local environment and the current farmer practices in an area. The tool only requires an answered questionnaire with the information about the farmer’s field, the farmer’s management practices, and the cost of

production. This information will be inputted in the software to generate a fertilizer recommendation that is unique only to the farmer’s field and locally available fertilizer sources. The tool also presents a simple profit and net analysis comparing costs and benefits between farmer’s current practices and the recommended improved practice.

In addition, Nutrient Expert® for Cassava was designed as a learning tool—providing quick help, instant summary tables, and comparative estimates; plus allowing a great amount of flexibility in navigating through the modules on the software. The guidelines provided by this software are consistent with the concept of 4R Nutrient Stewardship and scientific principles of Site-Specific Nutrient Management (SSNM).

The introduction of the app to AEWs as our field partners would be useful in bridging the gap between technologies and ATI’s clients.

A total of 20 AEWs from cassava-growing areas of the Cordillera were the participants of the said training held on October 25-27, 2023.

Extension Modality Officers Meet, charts plans towards empowerment



LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET. ATI-Cordillera through its Partnership and Accreditation Section (PAS) initiated the 1st Extension Modality Officers Meeting on December 12, 2023 at the Sab-atan Hall, ATI-RTC-CAR, BSU Compd., La Trinidad, Benguet.

In her message, Dr. Cristine Esnara, Chief of the PAS emphasized the need to fortify the organizational framework and operational efficiency of extension modality officers and staff. Through the leadership of the extension modality officers, it is hoped that the various modalities will become a potent driver of agricultural development in CAR.

In essence, the 1st Extension Modalities Elected Officers Meeting is a proactive response to the evolving landscape of agricultural extension. It seeks to empower officers with the tools, knowledge, and collaborative networks necessary to navigate challenges, capitalize on opportunities, and contribute meaningfully to the advancement of agricultural development in our region.

Through this meeting, the ATI-RTC-CAR aspire to lay the groundwork for a more resilient, connected, and impactful extension modality.

The officers named the organized group CALSA or Cordillera Association of LSAs. The agenda tackled was the creation of the CALSA by-laws. Also addressed was the LSA Road-Map 2024 which is anchored on the ATI's PPA or action plans, and plan for organizational development activities in collaboration with LSA, government and non-government agencies.

Present during the meeting were: Mr. Ivan Baguilat (President), Mr. Michael Lumas-i (Vice President), Ms. Alma Mae Cortez (Secretary), Mr. Prahbat Marzan (Treasurer), Mr. Henry Macquera (PRO), Mr. Jeff Laruan (Benguet provincial representative), and Ms. Rachel Maling (Kalinga provincial representative).

The Agricultural Training Institute as the catalyst, capacity builder and knowledge bank has been developing various extension modalities to disseminate information, knowledge, and technology to farmers and rural communities in response to these challenges and developments, especially in the context of agricultural and rural development. To name few of these are Learning Site for Agriculture (LSAs), Techno-Gabay Program encompassing the Magsasaka Siyentista (MS), Community Urban Agriculture Model Farm (CUAMF), Private Agri-Fishery Extension Service Provider (PAF-ESP), Farm Family Model and many more.

(BLBuli-e with reports from CBEsnara)



CALSA Officers and PAS Staff (from left to right): Ms. Rachel Maling (Kalinga Provincial Representative), Ms. Perla Epie (CUAMF Focal), Mr. Michael Lumas-i (Vice President), Ms. Alma Mae Cortez (Secretary), Mr. Ivan Baguilat (President), Mr. Jeff Laruan (Benguet Provincial Representative), Mr. Henry Macquera (PRO), Mr. Prahbat Marzan (Treasurer), and Dr. Cristine B. Esnara (PAS Chief and HVCDP Focal).

ATI-Cordillera Promotes Malusog Rice and Balanced Fertilization Strategy

The Regional Training Center of the Agricultural Training in the Cordillera Administrative Region (ATI-RTC-CAR), in partnership with the DA's Philippine Rice Research Institute (DA-PhilRice) has completed the series of Technical Briefings on the Golden Rice and Balanced Fertilization Strategy. A total of 91 farmers were informed regarding the newly developed rice variety and the balanced fertilization strategy to encourage farmers to judiciously use organic and inorganic fertilizers to attain higher yields.

Experts from PhilRice-Isabela served as the resource persons about Golden Rice – its registration, variety lines, how it was made, agronomic characteristics, cooking techniques, its deployment and consumptions.

The Malusog Rice is developed through genetic engineering by the Department of Agriculture-Philippine Rice Research Institute in partnership with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) to contain additional levels of beta-carotene, which the body converts into vitamin A. Also, Malusog Rice can provide up to 50 percent of the estimated average requirement (EAR) for vitamin A of young children, the age group most susceptible to VAD in the Philippines. The Malusog rice has undergone careful study by experts in science and has passed the tests conducted by the Food Standards Australia New Zealand, Health Canada, and the

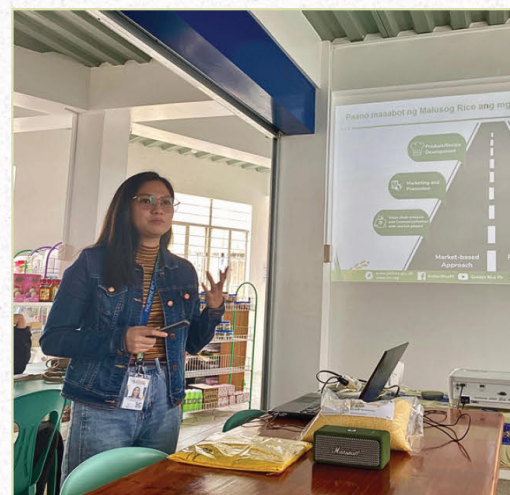


The beta carotene in Malusog Rice, which was made possible by the addition of two new enzymes, is identical to the beta-carotene found in green leafy and yellow-colored vegetables, orange-colored fruit, and even in many vitamin supplements and food ingredients. Like ordinary rice, the Malusog Rice does not require any special cultivation practices, and generally has the same yield and agronomic performance.

United States Food and Drug Administration. They acknowledged that Cordillera were the first to conduct series of technical briefings relative to the golden rice dissemination.

On balanced fertilization strategy, Mr. Edwin Dickson, the ATI-RTC-CAR's Focal Person on Organic Agriculture said that due to the increase in fertilizer prices, the Department of Agriculture launched the Balanced Fertilization Strategy (BFS) Program. BFS recommends the use of combined organic and inorganic inputs and other forms of strategy to attain the maximum potential of farmlands while promoting balanced fertilization in maintaining soil fertility. The





said strategy applies the concept of the 4Rs in fertilization: Right Source, Right Placement, Right Amount, and Right Rate to help enhance soil health and productivity, prevent the decline in soil fertility, and improve fertilizer availability and costs. As an organic agriculture advocate, much of his discussions focused on organic fertilizers. He said that inorganic fertilizers are the primary source of nutrients for plant growth while organic fertilizer improves soil properties (biological, physical and chemical). He said one source of organic fertilizers is broad leaves because these are high in nitrogen content. The general procedure is to chop and soak the broad leaves in cold water for 12-24 hrs. Simmer for 5-10 minutes. Blender the materials and pound. The dosage is 1 part is to 3-5 parts water and spray. Plant Juice can also be a good source of Nitrogen and Fermented Fruit Juice as good source of Potassium.

The series of technical briefings composed of four batches which were conducted on the following schedules: Conner, Apayao on July 18, 2023 with 21



participants; Tabuk City on July 20, 2023 with 22 participants; Pidigan, Abra on August 15, 2023 with 25 participants; and Sablan, Benguet on August 29, 2023 with 21 participants.

The two batches were conducted last semester 1, 2023 with forty-three (43) total participants. (BLBuli-e)



ATI-RTC-CAR SUPPORTS COMMUNITY GARDEN ESTABLISHMENT, PROVIDES STARTER KITS TO THE COMMUNITIES

In partnership with the Local Government Units particularly the Office of the Municipal Agriculturist, the Agricultural Training Institute through its Regional Training Center in the Cordillera Administrative Region completed its 15 batches of “Capability Building in Support to Community Garden Establishment on Urban Agriculture with the provision of starter kits” with a total of Three Hundred Ninety-Three (393) participant-recipient covering various parts of Baguio City and Tabuk City from July to September 2023.

The training is a one-day activity focusing on urban agriculture. Topics discussed include among others the benefits of Urban Agriculture, container gardening, square-foot gardening, making your own compost fertilizer, organic concoctions, insecticidal, and fungicidal plants. With the rapid urbanization rate where there is not much space or land to grow crops, container gardening is a viable alternative. It is a simple, and practical way of growing fruit, herbs, spices, and vegetable cultivation. In addition, container gardening is a fantastic way to grow vegetables, especially when you lack yard space, and helps control pests and overcome soil issues, enabling the availability of home-grown fresh produce without a yard.

The training is aligned with the Administrative Order No. 03, series of 2022, which pushes for the “creation of the National Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture Program (NUPAP), a new banner program of



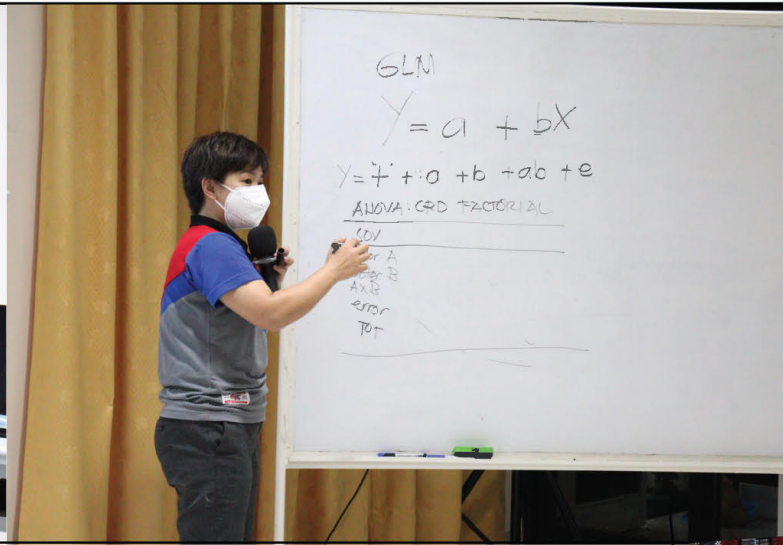
the Department of Agriculture (DA).” NUPAP aims to increase food production and lessen the logistics cost in order to soften the impact of global concerns like food security, climate change and the rising costs of fuel and other inputs. It aims to promote urban and peri-urban agriculture and other emerging agriculture practices through the Plant, Plant, Plant Program under the former DA Secretary William Dar.

After the training, participants were given starter kits composed of composed of 5 kilos of vermicompost and various vegetables seeds such as upland kangkong, pechay, tomato, okra, squash, ampalaya and stringbeans depending on their locality.

Through these inputs, it is hoped that they will be able to establish their own gardens and apply their learnings from the training.(BLBuli-e)



ENHANCING FARMING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH ON-FARM EXPERIMENTS



Agricultural extension workers (AEWs) play a vital role in agricultural development. They educate farmers through practical workshops, farm and business advisories, provide information support, training sessions, and technology demonstrations. Also, AEWs serve as bridges of scientific knowledge from various research institutions to farmers. Through these interventions, they help improve farming methods and make them more efficient and sustainable.

One of the neglected skills of AEWs that is also critical in improving farming methods is the conduct of on-farm experiments or research. This was emphasized in one of the consultation meetings conducted by ATI-RTC-CAR. On-farm experiments are critical in agricultural research because they give real-life insights into farming.



They are also critical in addressing particular challenges faced by farmers. However, it is crucial for prospective users to have proper training to understand and use the results of these experimental designs.

To address this need, the ATI-Cordillera conducted two batches of training on on-farm experiments, research designs, and data analysis, highlighting the use and operation of the Statistical Tools for Agricultural Research (STAR) Software on July 10-14 and September 18-22, 2023 at ATI-RTC-CAR, BSU Compd., La Trinidad, Benguet.

The STAR software was developed to help researchers/users conduct agricultural experiments. The software enables them to learn statistical concepts like randomization, replication, blocking, and analysis of variance (ANOVA). It's easy to use and offers various ways to analyze data, create helpful charts, and understand the information better.

This helps the participants transform their numerical data into research results that can be conveyed to farmers.



The training emphasized the importance of well-designed on-farm experiments in promoting sustainable agricultural practices. It emphasized balancing production and taking care of the environment. This knowledge enables participants to increase crop yields while preserving the environment for future generations by making prudent decisions.

This training program was conducted to help agricultural professionals effectively design and analyze research studies. It was attended by 42 (20 participants from batch 1 and 22 participants from batch 2) agricultural extension workers and researchers from different government organizations. Their presence showed a shared dedication to improving farming methods in the region. (RGSumedca)

Potato Seed Inspectors Train on Varietal Identification on the Different Stages of Potato



A total of 31 prospective potato seed inspector participants have successfully completed phase three of the Training on Potato Varietal Characterization and Field Inspection Practicum for Potato Seed Inspectors of CAR held on September 12-15, 2023 at the Dam-muh-han Hall, ATI-RTC-CAR, BSU Compd., La Trinidad, Benguet.

The training aims to enhance the skills of the participants to characterize varieties of potatoes at different stages and enhance their knowledge of field inspection.

The first topic that was discussed was focused on the status of the potato industry in the Philippines. The meat of the discussion focused on the following: Varietal and characteristics of approved NSIC registered potato varieties; Review of the seed certification guidelines, mechanics, and requirements of

seed certification; and Review of the field inspection protocol focusing on the roles and responsibilities of seed inspectors, and field inspection techniques.

Participants were immersed through a field practicum at the Bureau of Plant and Industry (BPI) experimental station. During the field practicum, they underwent field varietal characterization, collection and characterization of potato pests and diseases, and farm inspection. A field visit was also done at the Northern Philippines Root Crops Research and Training Center (NPRCRTC) based at Benguet State University, La Trinidad, Benguet. A supplemental topic on Photo documentation and video preparation was also tackled during the training.



The training is the phase 3 of the ladderized course on Potato Seed Inspectors. Phases 1 & 2 focused on potato seed production and certification (Phase 1) and potato production with emphasis on pest and disease identification and management (Phase 2).

Bridging the Fields and Harvesting Success: The 2nd Regional Extension Modalities Summit was Triumphantly Concluded

As the agriculture sector grapples with the challenges of feeding our growing population, 108 individuals composed of learning sites for agriculture cooperators, farm families, youths, Magsasaka Siyentistas and other extension modalities of CAR, came together and stood as beacon of hope. Aimed at fostering collaboration, embracing innovation, and empowering farmers, the 2nd Regional Extension Modalities Summit was held on November 14-15, 2023, at the ATI-RTC-CAR, BSU Compound La Trinidad, Benguet. This annual summit was first initiated in 2022 aiming to bring together the stewards of the land, the backbone of our societies, in a collective effort to help shape the future of agriculture in the Cordillera.

The heart of this year's summit lies in shedding light on the diverse range of government programs aimed at supporting farmers. Representatives from the PCIC, TESDA, and ACPC



presented their comprehensive overviews of initiatives covering financial and technical assistance, insurance program, and sustainable farming practices through employing Good Agricultural Practices as discussed by the BPI Baguio City. This served not only to inform but also created a dialogue where farmers provided feedback to the shaping of these programs.

Also, in celebration of the hard work and dedication of the

learning sites, one of the major activities of the summit was showcasing and promoting the LSAs farm products. Each province was given a display booth dedicated for them to showcase their diverse array of products. From fresh fruits and vegetables, to rice, coffee, eggs, to value-added products such as jams, wines, etag training and others. Handicrafts, potted plants, seedlings, and others were also traded during the event. Furthermore, to pave the way for further development and



empowerment of the learning sites and the youth, program ELSA (Empowering the Learning Sites for Agriculture) and ENGINE (Engaging the young Generations towards Innovative agri-Enterprise) were launched. Part of the ELSA program was the opening of the ATI-RTC-CAR Agricultural Product Display booth to help promote the products of our clientele.

Lastly, the Extension Modalities Summit also served as a nexus to create lasting relationships among the 92 certified learning sites all over Cordillera that is hoped to go beyond the event itself. The learnings sites were federated into a regional organization headed by their newly elected president Mr. Ivan Baguilat of Juamar's Training and Assessment Center (JTAC) in Lamut, Ifugao. As Dir. Danilo Daguio said, "We all want success, a good quality of life, so we in the government and you as our partners, let us join hands to achieve that dream." (MMLaduan)



TABUK FARMERS TRAIN ON RICE-BASED FARMING SYSTEMS

The last batch of the Training on Integrated Rice-based Farming System for farmers took place at the City of Tabuk, Kalinga, last September 12-14, 2023. It was participated by 30 rice farmers from the municipality of Tanudan and Tabuk City.

During the opening, Ms. Teresita Desay, the Assistant Provincial Agriculturist of Kalinga, urged the attendees to actively engage in the training considering that the training has hands-on demonstration. The training serves as a platform for participants to acquire knowledge about innovative technologies applicable to their specific fields, thereby enhancing their agricultural output. Ms. Desay also conveyed her appreciation to the Training Management Team from the Agricultural Training Institute-Cordillera Administrative Region for bringing such training for the farmers of the city and municipality.

Highlights of the training are the discussions on transformational



leadership, rice morphology, palay check system, integrated farming system, proper and cultural management of free-range chicken and vegetable production. Also, participants were enabled to do a hands-on exercise on feed formulation using the locally available resources such as trichanthera or madre de agua, ipil-ipil camote and malunggay leaves. Leaf meals were mixed with rice bran, soya bean and corn grits.

The three-day training provided them the importance of proper sowing bed preparation, timely transplanting of rice seedlings, and avoiding seedling cutting to

prevent diseases. It emphasized the significance of precise timing, selecting the right elements, and right amount of synthetic fertilizers in their rice farming. The discussed key checks will guide them in improving their harvest, particularly those applicable to their uphill rice fields.

At the end of the activity, the participants convened that they would demonstrate rice-based integrated or diversified farming system by planting vegetables and integrating chicken production utilizing the distributed starter kits. (EMZausa)

ATI Cordillera Implements its GAD Training Program to Engenderize Extension Workers



Mr. Ferdinand P. Gonzales
*Certified Technical Assistance Provider
 on Gender and Development at the
 Philippine Commission for Women*



Ms. Jam Balingan
*Training Specialist III and
 the Focal Person on GAD
 Programs*

The AEWs in the LGUs are the front liners in providing extension in their localities and are also expected to mainstream gender and development in their respective communities. Also, there is an increasing request for capability building including GAD in their programs as they have limited knowledge and skills in doing such. Hence, ATI-RTC-CAR through the Career Development and Management Section developed a Training Program for Engendering Extension in the LGUs. Thus, on July 25-27, 2023, Course One entitled Gender Sensitivity Training was implemented with a total of 21 AEWs in attendance.

Course 1 focused on understanding both women's and men's role, needs, interests, priorities, responsibilities within the community, and their relations to each other. Women and men equally play vital roles in society and development affects both men and women differently. Women and men

have different impacts on programs and projects. Hence, both must be involved in identifying problems, needs, constraints, and solutions.

Ms. Jam Balingan, Training Specialist III and the Focal Person on GAD Programs stressed in her overview that Gender Sensitivity Training (GST) is an initial effort to show how gender shapes the roles of women and men in society, including their role in development, and how it affects relations between them. Raising knowledge on gender sensitivity will provide an avenue for the change of structure of gender differentiation. In the context of development, all these require knowledge and appreciation of gender approaches or tools. As a practical tool, GST is important for analyzing gender differentiation and providing adequate knowledge regarding major factors that influence and are responsible for how gender is defined to an individual, an entity and even to a community.

Mr. Ferdinand P. Gonzales, Certified Technical Assistance Provider on Gender and Development at the Philippine Commission for Women, served as the resource person on GAD concerns. He shed light on the importance of understanding and promoting inclusivity in all aspects of life relative to Gender and Development. He uncovered the following topics to the participants such as Legal Mandates of GAD Mainstreaming, Analysis of Gender Issues in Extension, Valuing Male and Female Differences and Vision of Gender Fair Society.

Mr. Cristino Balancio, also a GAD advocate and a retired staff of the Center, discussed the topics of transformational Leadership. He demonstrated how transformational leadership can create positive organizational change and inspire individuals to reach their full potential.

During the closing program,



WHAT IS YOUR IMPRESSION?

"Before, I only see GAD as the classification of different genders such as LGBTQ+. Now, I learned that there are a lot of concepts to learn from, about GAD. I also learned that we can apply this learning not only in the workplace but also in our home and our daily activities where we interact with different people. As a newly employed in the Local Government Unit of Itogon, I encountered and made a research proposal where GAD principles can be incorporated so I am looking forward to the upcoming courses. I am interested on how to incorporate GAD into research proposals," Ms. Dalisay stressed.

Ms. Merly Dalisay, Agriculturist I of LGU-Itogon, Benguet said in her impression that the training broadened her knowledge on Gender and Development.

Mr. Charlie Sagudan, Center Director, encourage and challenged the participants to finish the course not only course 1 but also the remaining courses in the training program in order for them to be engenderize.

Course 2 focuses on Gender Analysis Tools while Course 3 focuses on GAD Planning and Budgeting.

RECALIBRATING RBO COORDINATORS AS MOVERS OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE RURAL AREAS



With the aim of capacitating the RBO Coordinators to be knowledgeable and skillful in organizing new and strengthening existing RBOs in their respective areas, the ATI in

the Cordillera conducted the 2nd batch of the Training on Recalibration & Organizational Strengthening for RBO & 4H Focal Persons held on July 19-21, 2023.

Rural Based Organizations (RBO) like 4H Clubs, Rural Improvement Clubs (RICs), Pambansang Manalon, Magbabaul, Mag-uuma, Magsasaka ng Pilipinas (P4MP), Magsasaka Syentista (MS), Indigenous People (IPs) are recognized as functional and productive partners of the Department of Agriculture in planning, implementing and evaluating programs and projects that will help alleviate rural poverty, increase farmers income, generate jobs, and improve quality of life in the rural areas.

Also, Administrative Order No. 09, series of 2002 states that

RBOs are encouraged to be revitalized and strengthened in order that they can become effective and efficient partners of the Department of Agriculture. Though, as embodied in the Local Government Code, the organization and management of these organized groups are lodged in the Local Government Units. These organizations have been organized by the coordinators at the barangay level and federated at the municipal and provincial levels led by the LGU RBO Coordinators and at the regional level by the regional RBO coordinators of DA-RFO and DA-ATI-RTC-CAR.

The resource person reviewed the participants about the rural-based organization's importance to agricultural development. Participants were also instilled with the right steps in organizing RBOs through the community organizing approach and were imbued with various



strategies for organizing new and strengthening existing RBOs in their respective communities. To be more engaging, the participants were subjected to role plays and games for them to feel and understand the various strategies in organizing rural-based organizations.

Since the participants are also trainers in their own ways, they

were also taught Trainers' Skills Development, particularly on the roles, tasks, and traits of a trainer, presentation skills, and visual aid preparation.

A total of 27 RBO Coordinators attended the said activity. (With reports from Ms. Veronica B. Siloy, RBO Focal)



Potential Seed Growers:

Farmers hone their Knowledge and Skills on Inbred Rice Seed Production



To bolster the rice industry and directly support local farmers of Kalinga, a training on inbred rice seed production and certification for potential seed growers was conducted. The training took place at Bulanao, Tabuk City, Kalinga with 20 participants on July 17-21, 2023.

The training aims to enhance technical capabilities of potential seed growers and to help ensure the availability of quality rice seeds in CAR. Also, it enabled the participants to enhance their knowledge and skills on production of high-quality inbred rice seed thereby increasing productivity and profitability.

Through the training, participants were instilled with the right mindset and dedication toward sustainable agricultural practices and the significance of seed quality for the community's success. Participants were familiarized with the objectives of the Rice

Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) and its direct relevance to their roles as potential seed growers.

Participants learned about the process of inspecting and certifying rice seeds to ensure that the distributed seeds are high quality. Additionally, traditional, and modern agricultural practices for optimizing inbred rice seed production were shared, and participants were equipped with fundamental financial knowledge and marketing strategies to support their seed production enterprises.

To reinforce their learnings on some of the discussion, participants were enabled to do hands-on exercises and field work such germination test, purity test, rouging and tagging.

The basic training served as their entry point since it is the pre-requisite to becoming a certified inbred rice seed grower and producer. Thus, after the training, participants are expected to process their requirements and be accredited as seed grower in their respective provinces. (EMZausa)



Laying the Foundation Towards Sustainable Agriculture: SALT AND PEPPER FARM



As the sharing of John Muir says, “Between every two pines is a doorway to a new world”- a great example is the Salt and Pepper Farm owned by the couple Andrew and Safe Pekas.

Few minutes away from the national highway at Kin-iway, Besao, Mountain Province, lies the Salt and Pepper Agricultural Learning Center Inc. (SPALCI), a certified learning site for agriculture by the Department of Agriculture -Agricultural Training Institute Cordillera and a TESDA partner in implementing scholarship programs NC II on Organic Agriculture Production, bread and pastry production and events management services.

The farm is surrounded by pine trees making the soil acidic. For certain years, the couple planted several crops hoping that these will produce a good harvest. However, few crops only thrive. Determined to make the area a productive one, they deliberately sought knowledge and skills to make it happen. They reached out to several well-known farmers and organic practitioners to help them realize their plan. According to the couple, they did several experiments in the area to make it productive. Investing their finances and other resources did not matter as long as they will learn more about sustainable agriculture.

After some time, the area is slowly becoming into the farm they are envisioning it to be. In 2019, it was certified as LSA naming it SPALCI and was provided with enhancement support in 2020.

For the couple, operating the farm strengthened their relationship as they complement each other- Andrew is involved



in the hands-on and technical aspect of the farm while Safe is more into administrative and coordination-related works.

The couple placed it in their heart to open the area as a learning avenue for others. Upon learning about the LSA program of the ATI, they did not hesitate to apply as they are looking for an 'authority' and opportunity to teach and share - being an LSA provided their needed answer.

"Sunga dakkel ti panagyaman mi iti ATI ta naikkan kami ti authority to share (so we thank the ATI for giving us the authority to share), with us being LSA certified, we have the confidence to train others, as it is our passion to impart knowledge", says Safe.

Little did they know that a financial support to augment their farm operation is part of being a certified LSA. Although they are happy to receive supports and interventions from ATI and other agencies, these taught them something,

"Nagdakkal ngay insuro na kanyami diay interventions kasla daytoy enhancement. Honestly ket maen-enjoy mi (as farmers) nga priority kami ti enhancement ken adda times a bigla kami nga maik-ikan ti additional supports (from various agencies). Kaya lang gayam, narealized mi nga adda koma gayam ti akin bagi idiyay da ngem naipan kanyami. Sunga mas nakar-karu nga nakita mi diay obligation mi to give back to the community ken opportunity to share" Safe shares.



On that, both Andrew and Safe are committed not just to train the participants but to facilitate them to become an organization so that they can do more after their trainings. "After the training, we made sure nga haan mi ibati isuda", adds Safe.

It was during the pandemic that they started to organize their participants. To date, they were able to organize three groups: Og-Ogbo, a women's group; Bangaan- Fidelisan- Tanulong-Aguid-Madungo Farmers' Association (BFTAMFA); and the Green Economist, composed of the displaced workers from various sectors like tour guides, weavers and sewers. Although the members of the Green Economist returned to their original works, they are still into farming particularly livestock production.

Partnership is always been a part of their operation. Aside from maintaining a strong link with the provincial and municipal local government units, they were able to forge network with DA-RFO-CAR and BPI BNCRDPSO that provided planting materials to their trainees.

Micro-organism dependent: Towards sustainable farming

The place used to be a camping area and accepting visitors who would want to enjoy its serene and cold environment. For some, they are geared towards farm tourism, but the Salt and Pepper Farm wants to concentrate more as learning avenue on sustainable agriculture. Further, they also want to establish a seed bank of open pollinated varieties for they believe that these seeds have already built resistance to pests and are suitable in the area.

At the farm's entrance is the composting facility that produces inputs that help in adding and sustaining the organic matter that will define the farm's productivity. They are convinced that thru microorganisms in the soil and feeding these with organic matter - the soil can be made productive especially in their case that their farm's soil is acidic. Now, they can attest that a fertile farm is possible under the pines.

For two years, they practice zero tillage in their farm. They only add layers of compost every time they start a new cropping season in such a way that it will not disturb the relationship already built among the microorganisms, soil and the roots of the plants.



Indeed, Andrew puts his heart in teaching about the importance of beneficial microorganism and their symbiotic relationships with the soil.

Before teaching some production technologies, Andrew points out the principle of farming anchored in the principle 'feed the soil and the soil will feed the plant...and the plant will feed you'... so that the trainees will really understand the need to give importance to the soil and to the thousands of beneficial organisms living in it.



Same principles of understanding the organisms living in the area applies in managing the pests and diseases of the crops. As such, they do not use commercial fertilizers and pesticides in their farm production.

Presently, the Salt and Pepper Farm is continuously producing vegetables in their farm in Besao as source of raw materials for the restaurant in Sagada, which they also opened as venue for trainings.

The couple knows that they need to endure more challenges especially that they opened their lives to help fellow farmers in ways they can. Despite listening to many 'adu la amin' (nonsense) from others, these are not comparable when they hear 'isu gayam' (it makes sense) especially from the younger trainees knowing that in one way or another, they have imparted valuable teachings to them. (JSSagpa-ey)



Responding Confidently to Extend to Farmers:

Story of Bacayan's Farm



God is in this story; God is in the details...., this is perhaps the best way to describe the journey of the Lumas-i family of the Bacayan's Farm at Tannubong, Ipil, Tabuk, Kalinga.

The 2.6-hectare Bacayan farm is a certified learning site for agriculture (LSA) funded by the Rice Competitiveness Fund (RCEF). As a rice-based integrated farm, lowland vegetables and itik-egg production are among the farming activities currently being undertaken. Further, TESDA CAR partnered with them to offer the course on Production of High-Quality Inbred Rice, and Seed Certification, and Farm Mechanization. The immediate certification was facilitated by the availability of land area to serve as a hands-on training area and machineries like combine harvester and thresher, which they personally purchased to be used in their farming activities.

Michael's Igorot name is Bacayan which he used to register as the name of the farm. He is also fondly called as 'doc' in their community and he is not called as 'doc' for nothing. As cooperator for technology demonstration areas for quite some time, partner agencies usually instruct him on what are to be done. Sometimes, Michael does not follow instructions and do things based on his instincts, with of course based on his knowledge, skills and years of experience in rice farming. At the end of it, the decisions he made are usually right.

His wife, Angie, and their children fully support the decision for their farm to serve as learning site. Presently, the farm is a standard example of family business enterprise where each has important role, to make their operation a success. With the two-day stay with family, this provided us a glimpse of the Bacayan Farms' operation.



Foremost, the family members and farm workers are set to have a breakfast together before doing their respective responsibilities. The couple provided first instructions and reminders to the farm workers. Michael also needed to answer his cellphone every now and then for coordination, directives among others as he is also a farmer leader with other social responsibilities aside from being a farm owner.

After breakfast, each family members are also set to do their own tasks.

Micah, the youngest, joined by his husband, carefully wiped and packed the eggs as ordered. They also do this with the freshly harvested vegetables like eggplant, cucumber, and tomato. They needed to prepare these ready for distribution to the buyers, which usually are ordered beforehand. Farm produce are being sold while the farm does not have an ongoing class.

Despite the rainy morning, other farm workers are seen in the rice field doing the roguing. Roguing is the systematic removal from the hybrid seed production field of off-types, plants of another crop or variety and diseased plants; or removing by hand plants of the variety for seed that do not appear healthy or sufficiently characteristic. While roguing can be done under the rain, supplemental pollination or locally called as 'pagpag', needs to be done when the pollens are dry. On this, the farm workers and the couple are hoping for the rain to stop as they are scheduled to do the 'pagpag' by rope pulling. In here, two workers hold the end of a long nylon rope from both ends and start pulling the rope



back and forth to shake the pollens from the panicles. Rice is basically a self-pollinated crop, however, in hybrid rice seed production, there is a need to perform 'pagpag' to shake the pollens from one parent (R line) to pollinate the other parent that has no pollen (A Line). This is done to ensure/enhance outcrossing.

(<http://riceportal.in/content/supplementary-pollination>)

Finally, the rain stopped.

Immediately, farm workers set the long nylon ropes in the rice fields waiting for the pollens to be dried out before doing the 'pagpag'. The farm needs to do this as scheduled in order not to delay the rice seed production.

Prior to being a LSA owner, Michael partnered with the SL Agritech Corporation (SLAC) to produce hybrid rice seeds. The farm committed certain area for the said endeavor. Accordingly, this is part of the agreement entered into by the Philippine government and SLAC as partners in ensuring the availability of the hybrid rice seed in the country. The partnership expanded the knowledge and skill of Michael and his family members on rice production as new technologies are being demonstrated in the farm.

On the other part of the farm is the vegetable area that grows various lowland crops- most of them are on their harvestable stage. Crops grown there will certainly thrive because of the good soil conditions. Accordingly, the soil in the area is clayish before but the couple was able to transform that part into an arable one. Knowing the importance of good soil condition,



PHOTO COURTESY: BACAYAN'S FB PAGE

they invested so much in the area incorporating rice hulls, coffee, and corn husks among others until such that those were made part of the soil. To maintain the soil condition, good agricultural organic practices are being done. A farm house is constructed in the middle of pond. The area used to offer a fishing and boating activity to the visitors especially during the pandemic. Presently, the pond caters to itik and itik-egg productions. Supposedly, these enterprises were provided to an association they belonged with. However, these enterprises are taken cared of the Lumas-i family since they have the area suitable for such. A certain portion from the income is given to the association.

RCEF as facilitator for advocacy

The couple beforehand is already practicing diversified farming. In 2010, Mr. Bacayan was awarded the National Gawad Saka as Outstanding Hybrid Rice Farmer Award. As prizes, they were given drum seeders to be used for their farming activities. However, it was only through the RCEF that they utilized the drum seeder and

experienced its benefits. Further, with the RCEF, they need to demonstrate the use of rice transplanter in their farming activities. The machine can be operated by anyone and that even the children may assist in the operation. Moreover, compared to manual transplanting, the seedlings are planted in a uniform distance and can easily grow and recover from transplanting shock.

Generally, as an LSA, they made sure to apply and incorporate the mechanization in their farming activities. They attest that use of machineries lowers the cost of the inputs in their rice farming activities as less man powers are required.

With the study undertaken for the RCEF program, there is a 30% increase of the farm income to the family because of employing the technologies and practices under RCEF.

Being an RCEF-implementing partner was not that easy path for them during the earlier days. There was a point where they able to have 38 enrollees, but only eight

completed the said course. These eight graduates, are what they considered as the 'success stories' of the farm school. It is good to note, that some of those who did not continue re-enrolled to finish the course being offered by the farm. Micah shares, 'maragsakan kami nu ada masabat mi nga mang-ibagbaga- agpaysu gayam jay inadal tayu panggep panagrecord. Idi nalpas adal tayu ken nag-apit, nagrecord ak ket nakitak nga ada gayam ganansiya". (What we learned about recording are true, I did record and I learned that indeed, I have a gain from my harvest.)

Further, the couple added, that they now see the fruits of advocating the good rice production management. He recalls, "idi ah ket ipapilit da ti kayat ken ammu da, ngem tatta inot-inot met ket nakita da ti usto nga wagas gapu ti trainings. Kasla iti panag-usar ti drum seeder. Adda ti maysa nga kanayun nga mang konkontra, ngem tatta ket isunan kadua mi nga mang ibagbaga ti kinamayay ti drum seeder ti dadduma. Nu ti panagpadanum, ti ammu ti farmers ket adu ti kasapulan ti pagay isunga idi ket awan ti dumanun ditoy banda mi. Ngem tatta ket ammu dan ti usto, sunga tatta adun makadanun ditoy banda". (before, fellow farmers tend to stick with their old practices, but because of the trainings they now learned the benefit of using a drum seeder and proper water management).

With the issues besetting the government like the rice tariffication law (RTL), they took the chances to share their ideas in their classes.

When trying to answer issues on this, some farmers usually tell them, 'imbag kayu ah ta farm school" (good for you, you are farm school, so you don't experience the negative effect of RTL. In calm ways, they answer, 'habang naad-adal mi ti RCEF, isu ngarud nga ik-ikan da datayu ti high yielding varieties, haan nga diay da dati (varieties) nga iulit-ulit. Iti RCEF, isursuro da mangpalaka ti gastos tapnu adda apitem, adda kitaem. Iti number one nga pagrigigatan ti farmers ket bin-i. Isu nga idi nasuro dan nga 20 kilos (either hybrid or inbred) ket umanay ti maysa hectare ad adu mai-save da idiy bin-i. Maysa pay, isursuro nu kas anu diay pag spray (proper and right application-timing), adda lang makita nga agtay tayab ket haan dapat agspray a dagus."

Angie continues that other farmers usually ask them why they are not spraying to their plants.

She answers and advises them, "dayta ngarud diay kunada nga ad ad-adalen tayu ti FFS nga nu adu ti beneficial insects ket haan a kasapulan nga agspray.... Dagita sapot ti spiders isu ti mangsapot ti kalaban nga insekto ket nu agspray ka, matay dan ti spiders... Isu kanayun ko nga ibaga-baga, ma-asuyan kayu ti bagi yu, malaksid pay nga ma-poison ti bagi yu ti kai-spray, kitaen yu haan kayu pay naka PPE, agsigarilyo kayu pay. Anya ngay serbi yu ag ta-trabaho sabay ibaga yu nga narigat ti biyag. Sino ba ti mangpar-parigat kanyayo? Saan yu abusu-en ti bagi yu."

(That is why through the RCEF, we are being taught to use high quality rice seeds, that we can use 20-kilo seeds (either hybrid or inbred)

for one hectare. We are also being taught on proper timing and right way of spraying. In the FFS, we are learning about beneficial insects like the spiders and the use of PPEs.)

The then.

In 2019, Michael, at that time was the chair of the Regional Agriculture and Fishery Council (RAFC). Every after their meeting at the DA-RFO Baguio, he typically visits other Offices like NIA-CAR and ATI-RTC-CAR. During one of his visits to ATI-RTC-CAR, Mr. Cristino Balancio saw and asked him if he wanted to become an LSA. Immediately, without hesitation, Michael submitted a letter of intent.

He already had knowledge on what is LSA is all about. As a P4MP leader, he is being invited to attend meetings along with other RBOs groups like LSAs, MS, and RIC. During meetings where LSA and MS are being discussed, in his heart, Michael silently prays, 'maysa ak met koma ijay". Nevertheless, Michael continuously engaged into farming and slowly develop his area. True enough, at the perfect time, that dream God placed in his heart became a reality as he now joined the LSA family in the Region.

Similar with other success stories, Michael and Angie needed to endure the test of time.

Angie recalled that she applied to work abroad but Michael persuaded her to stay saying

– “apay anya ti apan mo gatangan idiaiy ket nu ada met lang ditoy... ket nagbayag nga taw-en awan metten en haan ko la magatang diay ar arapa paapek, agyaman ak ta haan ko intuloy, etan mabalin kon apan agpasyar idiaiy dadduma nga lugar”.

The couple started tilling the farm and for years slowly develop the area. They used to live in a small house as they called kubo. At that time, there is no road connection in the area giving the family a hard time to go to the town’s center.

The couple’s children, even at young age were exposed to farming activities, which they said- they enjoyed it. The children needed to experience and endure the hardship of putting meals in the tables so as to give them the courage to teach others now.

Two of their children did not graduate from college. They opted not to because they knew the hard works of their parents to provide their needs to go to school. At that time, three of them were already in college. Although they did not finished college, they are fulltime trainers in their farm school, like their parents.

At first, their credibility to teach was doubted/challenged by their students who are fellow farmers older than they are. Their parents attest that they also know the basics of farming saying, ‘ammu dagita ti kamote ken mani’, because as young as they are, they are already tending to farming activities with their parents. Armed with experiences and series of trainings they attended that widened their

knowledge, they confidently stand in front sharing their knowledge and skills on agriculture need not to prove that they are really worthy to be called as trainers.

Partnership: One of the building blocks of their success.

Although the couple are into farming, it was Angie who first showed the passion to learn about new farming technologies so she took time to attend seminars, trainings, and fora, among others. Michael was then ‘too shy’ to interact with other people. Even then, Angie patiently invited him to join seminars and open his doors for networks until such time that Michael had the confidence to personally interact with others and expand their partnerships. And now, he is very good at it, building and sustaining relationship with others- a virtue that serves as one of the building blocks of their success.

The farm always caters to various visitors from government and private agencies and individuals. Even for short visit, Michael and the family made sure that the concerns of these visitors are well attended to- be it for monitoring, updates, simply a short visit and or storytelling. The family took time to share stories, learn and laugh with the people visiting them, over cups of flowing coffee of course.

Michael, being a farmer leader, made sure to attend to his responsibilities to other farmers and to assert the voice of his farming community.

With the inevitable rice field conversion to commercial areas in Tabuk, they are recommending,

together with other stakeholders, the need to expand the rice production areas to other places. In support to this plan, the Bacayan’s farm is set to conduct mobile class to other municipalities like in Tanudan. Through this mobile class, they can share the technologies being employed to help increase the yield of the fellow farmers.

Part of their plan is to extend their links with other agencies while sustaining their existing networks. In time, they are set to collaborate with the DepEd on Agri and Fishery Strand under the Technical Vocations Livelihood (TVL) track of the K12.

With passion, the family patiently developed the farm into what it is today- an avenue to teach good and sustainable farming practices and inculcate right values to others.

Their love for farming and their passion to share enabled the Bacayan’s Farm to endure and rise above challenges and difficulties of life. It is a very good example of a productive and closely knit farming family that proved that there is hope in farming. Indeed, just like what everybody else say, a family that farms together, grows together and inspires together. (JSSagpa-ey)







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